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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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June 18, 2004

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President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Avenue Complex
Washington D.C., 20393

Dear President Bush and Secretary Ridge:

As Members of the House Committee on the Judiciary, we write to express our serious concerns with the recent disruptive enforcement actions the Border Patrol has undertaken in the California counties of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino, and urge their immediate halt.

Border Patrol agents reportedly have questioned pedestrians in crowded residential communities and places of work and, to date, detained 410 people. These actions, which have caused chaos and fear to spread throughout immigrant communities, reportedly are based on Secretary Bonner's ill-considered decision to override an August 8, 2003 memo issued by the San Diego Border Patrol chief William Veal. This memo had reaffirmed a "long standing agency policy" that prevented Border Patrol agents from conducting sweeps near residential areas and places of employment.

Given the negative impacts these enforcement actions are having and the many uncertainties and questions they raise, please address the following issues:

- What is the legal authority for the Border Patrol undertaking these interior sweeps?
- What are the goals of these sweeps?
- How do agents identify people who are targets of these sweeps? The settings of these questions lead to the inevitable conclusion that people have been targeted based on ethnic profiling.

President George W. Bush
The Honorable Tom Ridge
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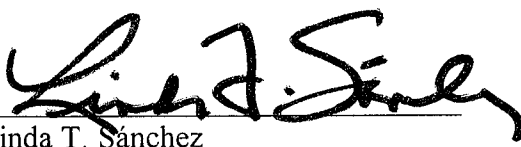
- Patrol officials have said that all arrests were based on "consensual conversations." How and when were the targets advised that they had the right not to consent to these "conversations?"
- How long does the Border Patrol plan to undertake these interior sweeps? Are there plans to expand this initiative to other parts of the country?
- Given the Border Patrol's limited resources, how can you justify taking agents away from the border?
- Why are our precious resources being used against immigrant families who you said "bring to America the values of faith in God, love of family, hard work and self reliance" rather than on high-risk individuals who mean to do us harm?

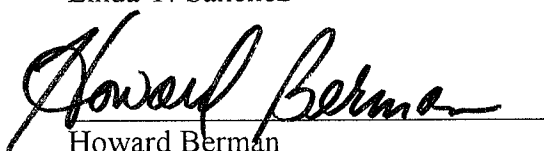
The Border Patrol initiatives in Southern California appear to return our nation to problematic enforcement actions that occurred regularly in the late 1970s and 1980s. However, we live today in different times which demand different solutions. Instead of implementing problematic initiatives, we urge your Administration to work with us to reform our immigration laws. Most now agree that our immigration system is broken and needs to be fixed and that enforcing dysfunctional laws leads only to more dysfunction.

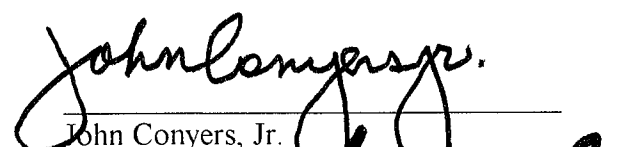
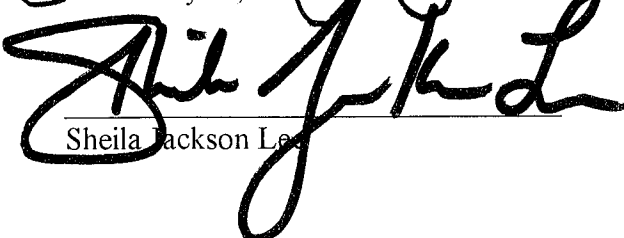
President Bush, in your January 7 statement on the need to reform our immigration laws you emphasized that "As a nation that values immigration and depends on immigration, we should have immigration laws that work and make us proud. Yet today we do not." The Border Patrol's recent enforcement actions take our nation even further from having immigration laws that "work and make us proud."

We urge you to immediately halt these ill-considered enforcement actions and work with us on undertaking those reforms of our immigration system that our nation so badly needs.


Sincerely,

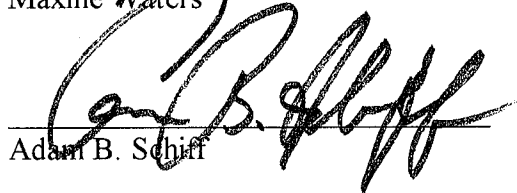

Linda T. Sanchez

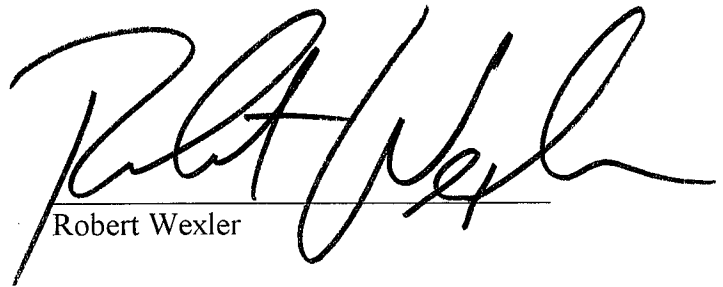

Howard Berman


John Conyers, Jr.

Sheila Jackson Lee

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The Honorable Tom Ridge
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Maxine Waters


Adam B. Schiff


Robert Wexler

cc: Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson
Undersecretary
Border and Transportation Security

The Honorable Robert Bonner
Commissioner
Bureau of Customs and Border Protection